

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T ATHENS 2718

EXDIS

ALL MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, GR, US

SUBJECT: U.S. - GREEK BASE NEGOTIATIONS: MEETING WITH TZOUNIS

REF: A. ATHENS 2695

B. ATHENS 2613 (NOTAL)

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE BERGOLD AND
DCM STEARNS CALLED ON MFA'S DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL
AFFAIRS JOHN TZOUNIS THIS MORNING FOR A BRIEF TOUR D'HORIZON.
REFERRING TO FIRST PLENARY SESSION OF U.S.-GREEK
BASE NEGOTIATIONS, IN WHICH HE HAD PARTICIPATED YESTERDAY,
BERGOLD COMMENTED THAT HE HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT SURPRISED TO
FIND GREEK NEGOTIATORS TAKING SO NARROW A VIEW OF WHAT
CONSTITUTE U.S. FACILITIES WHICH "SERVE GREEK DEFENSE
NEEDS". IT WAS THE ASSUMPTION OF THE U.S. SIDE THAT
FACILITIES WHICH ENABLED US TO PLAY A STABILIZING ROLE
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WERE THEREBY STRENGTHENING GREEK

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DEFENSES. ACCORDINGLY, BERGOLD HAD BEEN DISTURBED TO

OBSERVE A TENDANCY ON THE GREEK SIDE TO ARGUE THAT ONLY U.S. FACILITIES WHICH COULD BE DEMONSTRATED TO SUPPORT DIRECTLY THE HELLENIC ARMED SERVICES ASSISTED GREEK DEFENSE. IT THIS LINE OF REASONING WERE CARRIED TO ITS LOGICAL, OR ILLOGICAL CONCLUSION THE GREEK SIDE WOULD FIND ITSELF ARGUING THAT ONLY ANTI-AIRCRAFT AND SIMILAR WEAPONS BASED ON GREEK SOIL SERVED THE DEFENSE INTERESTS OF GREECE.

2. TZOUNIS REPLIED THAT IT WAS NOT REPEAT NOT THE GREEK INTENTION TO BE OVERLY RESTRICTIVE. "OUR POSITION IS MORE FLEXIBLE THAN IT MAY APPEAR," HE SAID, ADDING THAT THE GOG HAD TAKEN NO REPEAT NO HARD AND FAST DECISIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN FACILITIES IN GREECE. SUCH DECISIONS, IN ANY EVENT, WOULD BE TAKEN AT THE POLITICAL NOT REPEAT NOT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL. THE GREEK GOVERNMENT REGARDED THE CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS AS A MEANS OF EXPLORING VARIOUS ALTERNATIVES. THE GOVERNMENT WAS UNDER POLITICAL PRESSURE TO REDUCE THE AMERICAN PRESENCE AND THIS PRESSURE COULD NOT BE IGNORED BUT HE WAS PERSONALLY CONFIDENT THAT THE OUTCOME WOULD BE SATISFACTORY FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW AS WELL AS THE GOG'S.

3. STEARNS COMMENTED THAT THE GREEK SIDE SHOULD BE AWARE THAT THEY WERE FOLLOWING WHAT APPEARED IN WASHINGTON TO BE TWO MUTUALLY INCOMPATIBLE POLICIES. ON THE ONE HAND GREEKS WERE PUSHING US TO LIMIT OUR MILITARY PRESENCE IN GREECE; ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY WERE SEEKING LARGE AMOUNTS OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND ACCELERATED DELIVERIES OF HARDWARE. WE DID NOT REPEAT NOT INTEND TO LINK THESE TWO SUBJECTS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS, BUT THEIR INCONSISTENCY WOULD BE APPARENT TO ANYONE FOLLOWING GREEK AFFAIRS IN WASHINGTON.

4. TZOUNIS SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD OUR CONCERNS ON THIS POINT, BUT REPEATED THAT NO FIRM DECISIONS HAD BEEN MADE BY THE GREEK GOVERNMENT ON OUR FACILITIES. "WE WILL HEAR YOU OUT," HE SAID, "AND THEN DISCUSS THE MATTER AMONG OURSELVES." HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT
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HE UNDERSTOOD FROM AMBASSADOR CALOGERAS THAT OUR PROPOSALS ON U.S. FACILITIES AT HELLINIKON (ATHENAI) AB WERE MAINLY "COSMETIC". BERGOLD REPLIED THAT THIS WAS NOT REPEAT NOT THE CASE. OUR PROPOSALS WERE QUITE FAR REACHING AND WENT WELL BEYOND APPEARANCES. IF THEY WERE ACCEPTED BY THE GREEK SIDE THE SIZE AND OPERATION OF THE BASE AT HELLINIKON WOULD DEFINITELY BE AFFECTED.

5. TZOUNIS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD WE WERE INTERESTED IN SEEING GREECE MOVE AHEAD IN ITS DISCUSSIONS WITH NATO. BERGOLD AND STEARNS SAID THIS WAS SO, AND UNDERLINED THE IMPORTANCE OF GREEK PARTICIPATION IN THE ALLIANCE. THEY SAID THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO DISCUSS SOME PARTS OF OUR BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT KNOWING WHERE GREECE WAS GOING WITH NATO. TZOUNIS SAID THE GOG IS "STILL THINKING ITS WAY THROUGH" ITS NATO RELATIONSHIP BUT THAT THE GREEK PERM REP AT NATO HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO BE IN TOUCH WITH HIS COLLEAGUES FOR DISCUSSION OF GREECE'S FUTURE IN THE ALLIANCE.

6. IN CONCLUSION, TZOUNIS SAID THAT IN ADDITION TO TAKING INTO ACCOUNT DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WANTED TO PROTECT ITSELF FROM THIRD WORLD CRITICISM. HE IMPLIED THAT THIS MEANT ASSURANCES THAT THE U.S. FACILITIES COULD NOT BE USED TO SUPPORT AMERICAN OPERATIONS AGAINST THE ARABS OR IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL IN THE EVENT OF A NEW OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

7. COMMENT. TZOUNIS AS ALWAYS WAS FRIENDLY AND REASSURING. THE MEETING WAS USEFUL IN PERMITTING US TO OUTLINE ONCE AGAIN THE BROADER STRATEGIC CONTEXT IN WHICH THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS MUST BE CONDUCTED. WE ARE INCLINED TO ACCEPT TZOUNIS' ASSURANCES THAT AT THIS STAGE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS THE GOG HAS NOT YET REACHED FIRM CONCLUSIONS AND THAT THESE WILL ULTIMATELY BE MADE AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL, PROBABLY BY CARAMANLIS HIMSELF. TZOUNIS ALSO INDICATED THAT THE GOG DID NOT REPEAT NOT FEEL ITSELF UNDER PRESSURE TO CONCLUDE THE BASE NEGOTIATIONS QUICKLY. IT IS EVIDENT
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THAT GREEK FLEXIBILITY, AS CARAMANLIS HAS HIMSELF IMPLIED, CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECTED BY DEVELOPMENTS ON CYPRUS AND IN THE AEGEAN.
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